

SPECIALTIES

OF KOREA

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Preface

Korea, a country widely known as a three thousand-*ri* land of golden tapestry from olden days for its beautiful mountains and limpid rivers, boasts many specialties.

The Korean nation with a 5 000-year history has processed various natural materials including Kaesong Koryo insam, which is counted across the world for its aroma, taste and medicinal value, as suited to their physical constitution and liking, and used them.

Among the specialties, which reflect their outstanding wisdom and talent, are those familiar to the people of the world for their rareness, uniqueness and excellent look.

The Editorial Board introduces some of these specialties in this book.

Contents

Pyongyang Cold Noodles

The Pyongyang cold noodles are not only a pride of Pyongyang, but also a representative traditional food of Korea.

The food is well-known for the characteristics of the materials it is prepared with, broth, meat, garnishing, the vessel in which it is served, and the way its strips are put in the vessel.

The major material is the powder of buckwheat which has been known from olden times to be good for longevity; the powder feels soft, has a unique smell and tastes sapid. The strips of the noodles made with buckwheat powder are not tough, and the unique taste of buckwheat whets the appetite.

People say the taste of the Pyongyang cold noodles is the taste of its broth. The broth is prepared with either *tongchimi* juice or meat

soup. *Tongchimi* is a kind of kimchi made with turnips pickled with a large amount of water; the water thus prepared tastes refreshing. Meat soup is prepared by boiling beef, pork and chicken. The broth thus prepared tastes fresh and sapid.

The way its strips are put in a vessel is special. The brass vessel that looks refreshing goes well with *tongchimi* juice and meat



soup. When the strips of noodles are put in the vessel, a little amount of broth is put first, followed by the strips, and kimchi, shredded meat, pear, cucumber and egg are put over the coil of strips; then the broth is poured again.

Pyongyang cold noodles not only taste nice but are characteristic in their appearance and the way they are served, so they are a byname of the Korean noodles and a representative of the traditional foods of Korea.

Pyongyang *Onban*

Onban is a food unique to Korea.

There are several kinds of *onban*, and what is most famous is Pyongyang *onban*, one of the four major foods of Pyongyang.

Pyongyang *onban* looks characteristic and tastes unique as chicken and mung bean



pancake are served on the rice.

It is peculiar in that chicken is seasoned with soy sauce and salt instead of spices so that it can retain its genuine taste, and mung bean pancake is served as garnishing.

The following is how to cook Pyongyang *onban*.

Rice is boiled, and pancake is cooked with ground mung beans. Mushrooms are parboiled and fried.

Chicken is washed and boiled. When the water begins to boil, oil and scum are removed and chicken is picked out.

The broth is seasoned with soy sauce and salt.

Seasoning is prepared with soy sauce, spring onion, garlic, sesame oil, black pepper and sesame.

Rice is put in a bowl, mung bean pancake, chicken, mushroom and seasoning are put on rice, and chicken broth is poured. And then threaded fried egg is put on it.

Yakpap

Yakpap, a specialty of Kaesong, is one of the oldest traditional dishes of Korea.

The local people in Kaesong prepared *yakpap* as a special food for the First Full Moon Day, birthdays, holidays and the days when they were visited by special guests.

The food is cooked in the following way.

Glutinous rice is soaked in water, washed and steamed.

Chestnuts are peeled and sliced. Thick juice is made by boiling seeded jujube for a long time.

Boiled glutinous rice mixed with honey is seasoned with soy sauce, mixed again with sesame oil, slices of chestnuts and jujube juice, put in a bowl. The bowl is sealed and put in a larger metal pot for steaming.

By the time when steam blows, heat is



adjusted so that the colour of rice can turn red.

When rice is completely steamed, it is put in a bowl and pine nuts and cinnamon powder are spread over it before being served.

Sometimes dried persimmon, bracken, mushroom and walnut are added.

Called *yakpap* (medicinal rice), the dish, for its original taste and method of preparation, refined look, aroma and nutritional value, has been well known as a health food and as one of the representative dishes of Korea from olden times.

Rice Cake

Rice cake is made by steaming cereal dough or pounding steamed cereals.

All the Koreans are fond of the staple food.

Glutinous Rice Cake

The Koreans make glutinous rice cake not only on holidays and family receptions but also on ordinary days.

The cake is made by steaming glutinous rice soaked in water for several hours, adding salt to it, steaming again and pounding it.

It is usually served dressed with honey or adzuki beans, soya bean flour or sesame mixed



sometimes with sliced jujube, chestnut, dried persimmon or mushroom.

The cake is effective for treating stomach diseases, protecting the body and helping digestion.

The cake is a must on the table of wedding ceremony.

Songphyon

Songphyon is a traditional Korean dish made with the fresh rice of the year.

The fresh rice is soaked in water first and then grounded.

Sugar and salt are added to fully boiled adzuki beans. These beans are pounded, boiled down and then kneaded, each to the size of a chestnut.

Pounded rice flour is kneaded with hot salty water, the dough is cut, and the pieces are rolled and shaped like a half moon or



shells, stuffed with the balls of adzuki beans.

Pine needles are spread on a steamer. When the steamer lets off steam, the cakes are put in it and steamed.

When the cakes are fully steamed, they are served with sesame oil spread over them.

There are chestnut *songphyon*, jujube *songphyon*, sesame *songphyon*, mugwort *songphyon*, etc, depending on what they are stuffed with.

The cakes can be made varied in colour and aromatic by kneading the dough with mugwort or deltoid synurus.

Paeksolgi

Paeksolgi is a kind of rice cake, and is called so as it is snow white and looks beautiful.

The main materials are rice and glutinous rice.

First, rice and glutinous rice are soaked in water and then pounded. The pounded rice is sieved and then steamed in a steamer.



When it is fully steamed, another layer of rice flour is applied on top of it and then steamed again. This is repeated several times.

It is served in slices.

This type of rice cake is served on holidays and family occasions for it looks and tastes good; it is also prepared on ordinary days.

Taedonggang Mullet Soup

Taedonggang mullet soup is one of the special dishes of Pyongyang.

Gray mullets are caught in several rivers in Korea, but the soup prepared with the mullet from the Taedong in Pyongyang is most famous in the country.

The Pyongyangites regarded serving



Taedonggang mullet soup to the guests of honour as part of their traditional etiquette.

The soup is so famous for its taste and high nutritive value that visitors to Pyongyang have thought that they really visited the city after being served with it, and the people in their regions would ask them, "How was the mullet soup?" as the first greeting.

The soup is prepared in the following way.

Fresh gray mullet is scaled, disemboweled, and washed. Its chunks are put in a pot with cold water and pepper, which is wrapped in a piece of cloth, before being boiled.

When yellow oil floats on the surface, the pepper is taken out, and the broth is salted. Then mullet chunks are served in the broth together with garlic and ginger.

Sinsollo

Sinsollo is a masterpiece of the traditional dishes of Korea, from which one can have a taste of all the delicacies while boiling in a brazier foods, mainly fried ones, prepared with rare materials from mountain, field and sea.

Originally, it was the name of a unique vessel for boiling a stew, called *yolgujathang*, but gradually it earned the meaning of the dish cooked in it.

The materials for preparing the dish number over 30 including beef, pheasant, chicken, pork, ox liver, trepang, shrimps, carrot, dropwort, bellflower roots, etc, as well as various seasonings.

The dish is prepared by roasting, frying or seasoning each material or making wonton with it separately according to its characteristics, putting them all in a brazier with a hole at the centre, pouring meat broth over



them and salting them, before putting charcoal through the hole and lighting a fire. The dish ranks first in the kinds of materials, seasonings and the way it is prepared.

Sinsollo is known as a dish efficacious for good health and longevity as it not only tastes delicious but also contains many nutrients including protein, fat, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrate.

As it has a good taste and looks beautiful, it is served at a party. And as it is enjoyed by several people together, a corresponding number of spoons and dishes are served.

Samgyethang

From olden times people wished for a long life.

Koreans have developed foods good for health.

Chicken tastes good and helps digestion, and Kaesong Koryo insam is well known for its medicinal effect. *Samgyethang* is prepared with chicken and insam. Originally wild insam was used, but from the days when it began to be cultivated artificially, insam has been used in place of wild insam which is hard to obtain.

Samgyethang prepared with black hen is counted first.

The method of its preparation is as follows.

Black hen is washed, its head and feet are removed, and its stomach is stuffed with insam and then stitched with thread; while the water with the hen is boiling in a wok or pan,



the scum is removed; and it is continued to be boiled on a weak fire. After it is fully done, it is served in an earthenware bowl together with salt.

The food is good for health in hot days, and is especially efficacious for treating those with general debility and for recovering health.

The roots, leaves, stem, flower bud and fruits of insam contain saponin, sugar, essential oil, amino acid, peptide, organic acid and various vitamins, minerals and microelements.

Kimchi

Kimchi is one of the most representative national dishes of Korea.

The Korean people see to it that kimchi is never omitted however many rare dishes there may be on the meal table, and regard it as a custom to serve fatty meat with kimchi and rice cake and pancake with kimchi juice.

It not only tastes good and unique but is good for health and longevity as it contains vitamins and various other nutritive ingredients.



Whole bok choy kimchi

Kimchi tastes fresh yet pungent, fragrant yet refreshing and sour, adding to the appetite, and its red-coloured seasonings make the mouth water.

Renowned among its different kinds are whole bok choy kimchi, *tongchimi*, *possam* kimchi and *kkaktugi*.



Tongchimi

Whole bok choy kimchi is made by pickling bok choys and adding various kinds of seasonings, before fermenting them.

Tongchimi is characterized by clear juice with refreshing taste as whole turnips are pickled with a large amount of water.

Possam kimchi is prepared in the way of



Possam kimchi



Kkaktugi

putting seasonings between the leaves of pickled whole bok choy, cutting them into pieces, and wrapping the pieces with a large leaf.

Kkaktugi is made by cutting turnips in a cubic form and mixing the cubes with seasonings before being fermented.

Kimchi, a traditional food of the Korean nation, is recognized as a health food in the world.

Highly nutritious, kimchi plays various physiological actions.

Polysaccharide and lignin in it promote the activity of the stomach and intestines, helping digestion and lowering the concentration of cholesterol by forming viscous solution; thus it is very efficacious in the prevention and treatment of hypertension, hyperlipemia, heart diseases and obesity.

The bioactive materials contained in chilli and garlic in it help retard ageing of cells, kill harmful germs, alleviate pain and improve immunocompetence. Garlic, in particular, kills germs that cause food poisoning and gastric ulcer and activates energy metabolism, thus invigorating recovery from fatigue and stamina.

Kimchi is now produced by an industrial method as well as by families.

Pyongyang *Soju*

Soju is a kind of liquor produced by fermenting starchy materials and distilling them.

In the past it was called in various names, like *hwaju* (fire liquor) as it was distilled on a fire, *roju* (dew liquor) as it was made by cooling steam, and *paekju* (white liquor) as it looked clear and white.



It was propagated in the country from the mid-13th century in the period of the Koryo dynasty. With the highest alcoholic content among the traditional liquors, it became wide-spread in the days of the feudal Joson dynasty as a medicinal drink at first and then as an ordinary drink.

The people in northern areas such as Phyongan and Hamgyong provinces enjoyed drinking it, and the liquors from Pyongyang, Kaesong and Andong were especially popular.

The main raw materials of Pyongyang *soju* are maize and rice, and its alcoholic content is 25%.

It is distinguishable from its types from other regions in that it tastes mild, light and refreshing.

It is mild and light because it is made with the highest-quality ethyl alcohol and water refined by advanced technology.

Pyongyang *soju* was registered as the national liquor of the country for its traditional taste and popularity.



Kaesong Koryo Insam

In Korea, which boasts its beautiful mountains and limpid rivers, there are many plants of medicinal value, and its people have long cultivated, processed and used them.

In particular, insam, whose roots look like a human body, has been cultivated for thousands of years, and was named Koryo insam.

Kaesong Koryo insam is renowned



Insam field



Insam fruit

in the world for the place of its origin, which is quite suitable for farming it in terms of climate and soil.

Insam farms, situated at the foot of Mt Songak in Kaesong, are developing the traditional methods with the historical foundation stock.

Kaesong Koryo insam contains amino acid, vitamins, monosaccharide, polysaccharide, inorganic materials and amylase.

When Kaesong Koryo insam is dug out just in the field, it is called *susam* (water content: 70-80%), *paeksam* (water content: 11%) when *susam* is washed, stripped of its bark and dried, *hongsam* when *susam* stripped of its bark is steamed and dried under the sun, *tangsam*

when *susam*'s rootlets are trimmed off and the root is boiled down with sugar, and *misam* when the rootlets are dried.

In Pyongyang, the capital city, and local areas there are bases for processing insam and producing insam products.

Among them is the Kaesong Koryo Insam Processing Factory, situated in Kaesong, the centre of insam cultivation and its processing industry in the country; this comprehensive factory mass-produces tens of kinds of tonics and health foods with six-year-old Kaesong Koryo insam, which is efficacious for invigoration, retarding ageing, immunopotentiation and against cancer and radioactive rays. It also produces hundreds of other products.

The aromatic Kaesong Koryo Insam Liquor has won gold medals in international trade fairs.

For the tonics, health foods and cosmetics have omnipotent efficaciousness against several diseases as they protect the five viscera and promote metabolism by acting on the brain and the vascular system, the demands for them are increasing at home and abroad.



The Insam Association of Korea strives to inherit and develop the traditional methods of cultivating and processing Kaesong Koryo insam, which is protected under the Law of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Insam.

The association is also conducting international cooperation and exchanges in Kaesong Koryo insam on the principle of trustworthiness and profitability.

Kaesong Koryo insam is contributing to promoting the health and cultural development of mankind, still boasting its medicinal efficaciousness and time-honoured history.

Chilbosan Pine Mushroom

Pine mushroom rich in Mt Chilbo is counted top among the mushrooms in Korea for its unique taste and smell.

The cap is 8-20cm in diameter, and the surface is of brown colour, getting darker towards the centre. The tissue fungus is thick, white and solid and has special fragrance.

The cylindrical stalk is 10-20cm high and 1.5-3cm in diameter, and the thickness of its top and bottom is the same or slightly tapers toward the top.

It grows largely in early September as the rain falls often in the area in this period and southeasterly wind blows frequently, so the weather is cool with severe temperature difference between daytime and night.

As it tastes fresh and is highly nutritious, the mushroom is used for making various foods including canned foods. The powder of dried





Pine mushroom liquor

mushroom is good as a seasoning.

The mushroom helps promote health, give favourable effect on the digestive organs, and alleviate pain, and it is good if used when one feels heavy in the chest and coughs up much phlegm. The mushroom is also efficacious against cancer and as diuretic.

Paektusan Bog Bilberry



Paektusan bog bilberry is massively found in the area of Paektu, the highest mountain in Korea. About 30 000 hectares in the area are planted with the shrub.

The shrub is 30 to 40cm tall, 1.2m at maximum.

Two or three full-blown flowers droop at the tip of an old branch from late June to late July.

The dark purple fruits get ripe from late July to late September.

The Korean people have long used the fruits against coughing, diarrhea and bleeding; children who suffered from measles and women who gave birth to baby have taken it for health recovery.

It is said that regularly taking the fruit is good for purifying blood and preventing high blood pressure and arteriosclerosis.

It can be taken raw and as alcoholic drink, juice or jelly.

It is also used as a raw material for dye and medicine.

Hoeryong White Apricot

Highly resistant to cold, Hoeryong white apricot is an intermediate apricot species of good quality.

The flowers bloom white in spring, adding beauty to the natural scenery, and in summer the plant gets heavily loaded with fruits.

The plant is cultivated in Hoeryong and other parts of the northern and central regions of Korea.

A fruit weighs 60 grams, and its skin is



whitish yellow with the part that has got much sunlight looking light red.

Its seed is used as a medicine.

The fruit contains 7.92-8.18% of sugar, 1.04-1.83% of organic acid, 1.88-7.7mg% of vitamin C, and many kinds of enzymes and microelements.

Its light yellow flesh is juicier, tastes sweeter and less sour and more aromatic than other kinds of apricot.

It is processed into canned product and liquor, and used as a medicine.

Nyongbyon Silk

Nyongbyon, where Yaksandongdae, a scenic spot, is situated, is famous in Korea for its long history of producing silk.



According to historical records, Nyongbyon and other areas of Phyongan Province produced a larger amount of silk than other regions, and they were a centre of the silk fabrics industry in the country.

Nyongbyon produced various silk cloths, including open-work cloth, seven-coloured cloth and cloth woven with twisted threads.

The cloth woven with twisted silk threads was famous in the country.

In the course of weaving this type of cloth, the local people produced damask, quality silk unique to Korea, and manufactured doubling machine for weaving the cloth, thus developing the country's silk production onto a higher level.

The silk from this area is now known as Yaksan Silk and Kuryong Silk.

Nyongbyon silk with various patterns left a clear imprint in the cultural traditions of the Korean nation, still forming the mainstream of cloths for making traditional clothes of the people.

Lacquering Art in Thaechon



Natural lacquer produced from lacquer tree is a high-quality natural paint which cannot be made by any chemical method.

Lacquer, a white liquid with a suggestion of grey, turns black, red or brown when it is exposed to the air.

Solid lacquer takes a polish when rubbed.

The lacquer produced in the area of Thaechon, North Phyongan Province, is counted as the best among lacquer of various kinds.

Lacquer tree flourishes in this area, because

the area has a high level of precipitation and a high humidity which are a natural geographical condition favourable for the growth of lacquer tree which requires plentiful water.

In olden times, lacquerware made in Thaechon was in high demand at markets in several places including Pyongyang and was regarded as the standard of lacquering art.

Lacquered furniture and other articles made in Thaechon are characterized by colouring.

The lacquering art in Thaechon is still being carried forward.

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